United Nations

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General Assembly

Fiftieth Session

Official Records

72nd plenary meeting
Tuesday, 28 November 1995, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral ..... (Portugal)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Camacho Omiste (Bolivia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda items 20 and 154 *(continued)*

Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance

(a) Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations

Report of the Secretary-General (A/50/203-E/1995/79 and Add.1)

(b) Special economic assistance to individual countries or regions

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/50/286-E/1995/113, A/50/292-E/195/115, A/50/301, A/50/311, A/50/423, A/50/424, A/50/447, A/50/455, A/50/464, A/50/506, A/50/522, A/50/534, A/50/654 and A/50/763)

Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (A/50/743)

Draft resolutions (A/50/L.27, A/50/L.29, A/50/L.30, A/50/L.31, A/50/L.32, A/50/L.33)

(c) Strengthening of international cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster

Report of the Secretary-General (A/50/418)

Draft resolution (A/50/L.26)

Participation of volunteers, "White Helmets", in activities of the United Nations in the field of humanitarian relief, rehabilitation and technical cooperation for development

Note by the Secretariat (A/50/542)

Draft resolution (A/50/L.23)

The Acting President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I should like again to remind members that, as announced previously, the Assembly has deferred to a later date, to be announced, consideration of two aspects of sub-item (b) of agenda item 20 — namely, those concerning special emergency assistance for the economic recovery and reconstruction of Burundi, and international cooperation and assistance to alleviate the consequences of war in Croatia — as well as sub-item (d) of agenda item 20, concerning emergency international assistance for peace, normalcy and reconstruction of war-stricken Afghanistan.

95-86850 (E)

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Mr. Ravelomanantsoa-Ratsimihah (Madagascar) (*interpretation from French*): As this is my first speech in a plenary meeting of the General Assembly at this session, I should like to begin by performing the most pleasant duty of extending the Malagasy delegation's congratulations to you, Sir, on your election as a Vice-President and to the other officers of the Assembly on their election and of wishing you all full success in the discharge of the responsibilities that have been entrusted to you collectively.

Indeed, the Malagasy delegation is doubly grateful to the President and to the members of the General Assembly for granting its request for permission to take part in the debate on agenda item 20 even though the list of speakers had been closed.

With regard to sub-item (b) of agenda item 20, the delegation of Madagascar has very carefully studied the Secretary-General's report (A/50/292), which was prepared pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 1994/36, following General Assembly resolution 48/234 on emergency assistance to Madagascar. The delegation of Madagascar takes this opportunity to congratulate the Secretary-General on his concise and accurate report on the special geographical conditions in Madagascar and this region of the Indian Ocean, which is continually exposed to the ravages of tropical cyclones and to the widespread damage caused by these natural disasters.

We take this opportunity to thank the international community for everything it did in response to the prescriptions of Economic and Social Council resolution 1994/36, as well as the Department of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat, which had already undertaken a technical-assistance project — MAG/84/014 — to strengthen the Malagasy Government's arrangements for intervention in cases of natural disaster, at a cost of $400,000, revised upward to $700,000, at the request of the Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), to include the area of food security, and jointly underwritten by the World Food Programme and UNDP. This is an effective example of coordination, which my delegation hopes will be expanded to the whole family of United Nations bodies.

For its part, the Government of Madagascar has taken steps to combat the consequences of natural disasters by setting up a national fund to finance recovery and reconstruction activities. In addition, Madagascar, with the support of donors, has established a national fund for rebuilding damaged roads, 60 per cent of which is financed by the Malagasy State and 40 per cent by the European Development Fund. The report notes other measures that have been taken with regard to disaster monitoring, soil conservation and rice production, but, as the representative of the Philippines emphasized yesterday when he spoke on behalf of the Group of 77 — and we share his point of view — all those measures are no more than stopgaps, and there is a need to envisage a long-term plan enabling the developing countries in particular, which are more vulnerable than the industrial countries, to move from the stage of emergency assistance to that of reconstruction.

I do not wish to be unduly pessimistic, but it is indeed possible that after a cyclone has passed we shall find ourselves back at square one, that all the accomplishments of several years will have been wiped out in a few hours, or even a few minutes, and that we shall have to begin all over again. My delegation therefore earnestly hopes that the Yokohama Strategy for the prevention of natural disasters will be implemented in order to reduce, if not completely avoid, the damaging effects of such catastrophes.

In highlighting the value of the activities undertaken by all the United Nations organs and bodies, both governmental and non-governmental, involved in the strengthening and coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance, including special economic assistance, the Government of Madagascar would like to reiterate its deepest gratitude to all, those from near and far, who have contributed to them.

In concluding, the Malagasy delegation would like to emphasize that, like wars, poverty, famine and major epidemics, natural disasters are one of the great challenges before mankind at the end of this century, and we call upon the international community to take action to face it together and integrate it into a strategy for sustainable development. It cannot be denied that technological, scientific, human and even financial resources are more available than ever, if only the political will exists. Small countries like our own can do nothing against natural disasters, as the Secretary-General himself has noted:

> "Clearly, the Government of Madagascar at this time lacks the resources and the capacity to undertake an immediate and coherent emergency response and requires the continuing support of the international community.

...

"In spite of all these efforts, Madagascar remains vulnerable to the impact of natural disasters." *(A/50/292, paras. 12 and 16)*

Indeed, in 1995 Madagascar suffered no cyclones comparable to those of 1994. No state of emergency has been declared during this period, for which our delegation is grateful. But it nevertheless remains true that activities to strengthen the national capacity for intervention and reconstruction must be pursued, other assessments must be made and, of crucial importance, new sources of financing must be found. Madagascar believes that it can count on the international community.

Mr. Abdellah (Tunisia)(*interpretation from French*): In speaking today on agenda item 20, "Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance", the Tunisian delegation would like first of all to thank the Secretary-General for the excellence of the documentation submitted on this item.

The Secretary-General's concerns about the devastating effects of natural disasters and other emergency situations, including the loss of life they cause and their negative effect on economic and social development, as expressed in his report, are all shared by country.

Today, no region is totally immune to or untouched by natural disasters and man-made devastation. In poor regions, disasters have longer-term effects, since the populations affected are more vulnerable from an economic and social standpoint. In recent decades the proliferation of disasters in disadvantaged and ecologically fragile regions has contributed to a sometimes irreparable degradation of the environment.

Poverty, demographic pressures and soil use in areas at risk are all factors that have exacerbated environmental damage. In many cases they have caused destruction and an imbalance between man and his natural environment.

Need we emphasize any further the complex nature of natural disasters and other emergency situations, or that the populations and countries affected by them must face them with extremely limited human and material resources? Hence the importance of rapid reaction and the need for intelligent field coordination to limit damages, mitigate the consequences of disasters and enable populations to resume as normal a life as possible and take control of their situation. At the same time, prompt field coordination makes it possible for local and national authorities to respond speedily and effectively to the needs and expectations of the victims of such emergency situations.

In this enormous task the contribution of the United Nations system, together with governmental authorities, is of the utmost importance. Obviously, our States have all, in different ways, set up structures to deal with priority tasks in difficult situations. However, in such complex situations the expertise, experience and technical know-how available to the United Nations system are indispensable, given the magnitude such disasters often assume and the needs they create, which often go beyond the capacities of States.

In the field, the experience of recent years has shown that the effectiveness of the response to disasters and emergency situations depends on coordination and centralization in order to harmonize efforts, prevent resources from being wasted and avoid improvisation and amateurism.

This coordination must take place, within the framework of the United Nations system, between operational organizations and specialized agencies, under the aegis of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and in close cooperation with the Government of the country affected.

In this connection, we wish to express our support for the work of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs. The five objectives the Department has set itself in the framework of its activities for this year and the next are, we believe, priority matters. The establishment of a framework for coordination between the activities of the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Humanitarian Affairs is a step in the right direction towards intensifying and coordinating the activities of all parties concerned.

With regard to the Central Emergency Revolving Fund, Tunisia believes that its resources should be increased and maintained at a high enough level to enable it to respond effectively to emergency appeals.

This can strengthen its operations, increase its efficiency and enable it to respond effectively to disasters and other situations in which it is called upon to intervene.

In this context, we believe that the international community must take into account the long-term rehabilitation and development needs of the affected country from the very outset of an emergency situation or of a disaster. This approach can strengthen national capacities, mitigate the effects of disasters and prevent their recurrence.

This continuum of emergency relief and development, envisaged by the United Nations in this framework, is relevant to today's circumstance, in particular in the countries of Africa. In fact, over the past decade, conflicts and emergency situations have proliferated in Africa, causing suffering to the peoples, bringing about a loss of social and economic gains, and undermining the foundations of development. They have also increased the flows of refugees and of displaced persons. Hence, considerable financial and human resources must be diverted to emergency relief.

The United Nations system should, in these conditions: support efforts to prevent emergency situations; promote development; provide for continuity between the phase of relief and that of rehabilitation, reconstruction and development; and, lastly, help the affected countries to provide themselves with early-warning and emergency-action systems.

In this context, we reaffirm our support for the initiative of the Government of Argentina, which should lead to the creation of a volunteer corps, termed the "White Helmets". Tunisia, which supports this initiative, and which it co-sponsored from the very outset, believes that it can contribute to mitigating the effects of disasters and that it can help the affected country in the reconstruction stage.

The Argentine initiative is all the more timely because it advocates a global approach aimed at supporting humanitarian- assistance activities and at facilitating the transition from relief to rehabilitation, reconstruction and development. The "White Helmets" will also make it possible to strengthen South-South cooperation in this field and will, by the same token, enhance the capacities and resources of the United Nations, with a view to responding speedily to situations of instability that are proliferating in the world.

In this framework, Tunisia is prepared to associate itself fully with the Argentine initiative, in the hope that it will take concrete form under United Nations auspices.

Mr. Eteffa (Ethiopia): The Ethiopian delegation would like to thank the Secretary-General for his illuminating report (A/50/203 and A/50/203/Add.1), drawn from field experience, on the strengthening of coordination of emergency humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations.

It is a sad reality that the global need for humanitarian emergency assistance is more urgent today than it has ever been. This urgency is not decreasing, but increasing. Coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance is essential to solve the problems of handling humanitarian intervention. However, unless humanitarian assistance includes addressing the root causes of emergencies by working with all actors, lasting solutions cannot be found. Finding lasting solutions would involve, among other things, United Nations humanitarian agencies working together with other organizations and recipient countries in addressing real sources of conflicts.

Ethnic conflicts and civil strife and their devastating effects are only symptoms; the actual causes are unjust relationships of communities and abject poverty. These problems should be addressed in the spirit that abject poverty and injustice anywhere are threats to justice and affluence everywhere. This approach is in compliance with universal human values and humanitarian norms. Humanitarian organizations, civil societies and international non-governmental organizations should work with local organizations to monitor the violation of humanitarian norms. The present report of the Secretary-General notes:

> "One of the most glaring deficiencies in the overall response of the international community is the general lack of support for strengthening indigenous capacities and local mechanisms to cope throughout a crisis. Yet the strength of these local mechanisms is a major determinant in the struggle of affected communities to recover." *(A/50/203, para. 161)*

War and civil strife lead to increased calls for immense humanitarian assistance, making it difficult to play effective roles in appropriately implementing existing policies of coordination. In seeking a durable solution, the international community has to address at least two fundamental aims: first, to help the affected community through rehabilitation, recovery and reconstruction after the initial response to emergencies; and, secondly, to find workable mechanisms for addressing the underlying causes of conflicts.

In this connection, from the report under consideration we note with concern that donor countries are not so eager to contribute generously to rehabilitation and recovery as they normally do to immediate emergency requirements; especially as related to non-food items, the response of the international community is not promising. This is understandable because the initial stages of an emergency invoke more compassion than rehabilitation, recovery and reconstruction.

We appeal to donor communities and humanitarian agencies to pay serious attention to the process of finding a durable solution subsequent to their initial response to emergencies. However, transition from emergency to recovery and rehabilitation is difficult to define, so we have to address it as a package in a continuum.

We need to find a much more effective way of meeting our humanitarian goals in complex emergencies in terms of material and human resources, as well as strategies. And we need to do so with a heightened sense of urgency. Our capacity to respond quickly and effectively has enormous implications for saving human lives — not just in the short-term, but for the very prevention of future conflicts and for the prompt alleviation of tensions.

It would be appropriate to understand that unresolved humanitarian problems directly affect political stability and can potentially manifest themselves later as far worse humanitarian crises by increasing enormously the magnitude of humanitarian emergency needs.

Therefore, preventive diplomacy has a key role to play in humanitarian affairs. It is also time for us to recognize that taking responsibility for effective humanitarian response involves a joint four-way undertaking — by the United Nations, the donors, non-governmental organizations and the recipient countries. Unless they cooperate with one another effectively, the achievement of a positive impact will be elusive. In this respect, we note with satisfaction the cooperative efforts being made by all actors to help the victims of natural disasters and ethnic conflicts.

We are pleased to note that, since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 46/182 in December 1991, the coordination of United Nations humanitarian emergency assistance has been further strengthened and that the Department of Humanitarian Affairs has played a pivotal role. In this regard, we would like to express our deeply felt appreciation to the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Peter Hansen, for his commendable coordinating role — through the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and with individual humanitarian agencies — and for helping in-country coordination. The work of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, the utilization of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund and the launching of the consolidated appeals have shown that the aforementioned General Assembly resolution has been essentially implemented. We are deeply appreciative of the efforts of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs to monitor the implementation of the various resolutions.

We believe that all victims of disasters, whether natural or man-made, deserve to be assisted generously and on a timely basis by the international community in the spirit of humanitarianism and concern for the plight of our fellow human beings. In coordinating the activities of humanitarian assistance, we are encouraged by the efforts of all concerned in trying to abide by the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality set out in the resolution. The provision of humanitarian assistance must be based on the needs of the affected population. The alleviation of human suffering should be the sole criterion for humanitarian intervention.

Handling the problems involved in the complex humanitarian emergencies we are facing today requires new tools, techniques and strategies. The development of concrete and effective ways of strengthening the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance deserves particular attention. This would definitely involve, among other things, the challenges of establishing appropriate priorities in coping with emergency situations. In this regard, the efforts made to strengthen preparedness for responding to emergency situations seem promising, and we encourage the continuation of efforts to enhance preparedness.

Financial strength is one important means of strengthening coordination and preparedness to face up to these challenges. Resolution 46/182 provides for the establishment of a Central Emergency Revolving Fund of $50 million to ensure sufficient assistance in the initial stage of emergency. This is an important tool for the Department of Humanitarian Affairs to use in strengthening coordination. In view of the use of the Fund over the past years, we believe that its total size is too small to respond adequately or meaningfully to the increasing demand to save lives during the early stages of an emergency. We therefore think that further practical measures should be taken to strengthen the funding process in the interests of an immediate and timely

response. We endorse the recommendation that a separate window with an additional $30 million be opened within the Central Emergency Revolving Fund to act as a catalyst.

We believe that the Department of Humanitarian Affairs is doing a very difficult job extremely well within its means, and we feel strongly that it should be properly equipped with human and material resources for the formidable task of coordinating assistance for humanitarian emergencies. The Department of Humanitarian Affairs should continue improving its structure and strategies on the basis of experience in the field. We must close the gaps and eliminate any overlap in mandates that could lead to duplication in responding to emergencies; a clear line of authority is needed.

In conclusion, as far as natural disasters are concerned, the international community needs to encourage and fund scientific research and technology so that occurrences can be reliably predicted and adequate and appropriate preparations made. Until then, however, the task facing the United Nations is that of making full use of the existing humanitarian instruments in order to effectively address the challenges posed by complex emergencies and natural disasters. The further strengthening of these mechanisms must be part of the constant efforts to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the work of the United Nations. This would involve the commitment, collective leadership and dedication of all actors.

At present, we have no option but to be prepared to respond effectively to humanitarian crises and to follow them up with peacemaking, reconciliation and the political settlement of conflicts. Communities that are having difficulties should be encouraged and helped to create environments conducive to addressing root causes, which in turn would lead to harmonious relationships between the peoples in question. Humanitarian intervention should be only a prelude to political settlement. The basis of political settlement should be justice, equality and democracy.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Spanish*): In accordance with General Assembly resolution 45/6 of 16 October 1990, I now call on the observer for the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Mr. Küng (International Committee of the Red Cross: On behalf of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), I welcome this opportunity to share our views and concerns regarding humanitarian operations and coordination in emergency situations.

Most current conflicts have little in common with classic warfare organized into a structured chain of political and military command. Present conflict situations are far less clear-cut and hostilities are often spurred by the abundant supply and easy availability of small arms, land-mines and other weapons. The sometimes complete collapse of any form of authority except that which issues from the barrel of a gun and the flouting of the most basic human values have rendered conflict situations in the last few years much more complex. As a result, the plight of civilians is more agonizing and humanitarian workers are exposed to increasing security risks.

Often there is a lack of will, commitment, responsibility or consensus among political powers. Where political forces are absent or withdraw, the chances are that other actors will step in, and this may lead to a "privatization of warfare" without any clear ideological foundation.

Fortunately, there also is hope. We are particularly encouraged by recent positive developments in southern Africa, where efforts to create a climate of peace and stability appear to be succeeding. In some of the former Soviet Republics as well, we sense a growing spirit of reconciliation. There is also reason to hope that the peace accord negotiated for the former Yugoslavia will put an end to four years of horrible suffering and immense loss of life.

In certain conflicts today humanitarian action appears to provide a welcome sense of purpose and an excuse for States to evade their political responsibilities. Conversely, there have been attempts to use humanitarian assistance to bolster or add credibility to political or military designs.

Let us remember that humanitarian action does not set out to judge whether the causes for which belligerents have taken up arms are well founded or justified. Its sole purpose is to ensure that victims are assisted and protected. This is why the ICRC deems it vital that political or military action, including any action undertaken under the banner of the United Nations, must be conceived in such a way as not to erode the neutrality and impartiality of humanitarian operations.

Considering the magnitude of the humanitarian work to be accomplished, concerted humanitarian action is of paramount importance and the further strengthening of humanitarian coordination is an obvious necessity in

order to prevent the duplication of efforts and, thus, to achieve greater effectiveness.

Two separate aspects of this coordination effort, in which the Department for Humanitarian Affairs plays an important role, merit closer consideration.

First, the establishment of coordination mechanisms, which we consider a welcome and positive development. The standing invitation to attend Inter-Agency Standing Committee and related meetings allows the ICRC to explain its perspective, to voice its opinions on humanitarian issues and to share information on its operations. At field level, it contributes actively to inter-agency coordination efforts and supports arrangements designed to take into account rapidly changing circumstances. A determining factor for the degree of ICRC involvement in these mechanisms is its independence, which it must preserve to perform its recognized role as a neutral humanitarian intermediary.

Generally, we feel that coordination mechanisms should remain as flexible as possible. They should not impede more essential operational duties. Nor should they slow down the decision-making process. Coordination efforts must serve the best interests of victims, avoiding a bureaucratization of humanitarian action.

Secondly, an extremely important part of coordination consists in harmonizing humanitarian approaches, respecting each other's duties and tasks and acting in a coherent manner. For the ICRC, it is crucial that the mandate and role which the international community has conferred on it be well understood and respected, not only by the parties to conflicts but also by Governments and by other humanitarian agencies.

A concerted humanitarian approach is particularly vital for the protection of vulnerable groups, whether they are internally displaced people, refugees or detainees. There are now a growing number of agencies involved in this field, acting on the basis of different bodies of law and concepts of protection. In the former Yugoslavia and in Rwanda, for example, the ICRC feels that great care must be taken not to hasten the return of refugees and displaced people under adverse material or psychological conditions and at a time when uncertainty prevails regarding their resettlement in safety and in dignity.

Another source of particular concern for the ICRC is the overlapping efforts and divergent approaches which have recently affected its detention-related activities in some places. Every year the ICRC visits tens of thousands of prisoners, and its experience and expertise in this area are recognized. What we wish to avoid is a situation in which the activities of other bodies hamper or complicate the discharge of our specific tasks in this field, a situation which we fear could be detrimental to the very detainees we are seeking to help.

A major challenge for humanitarian coordination, and one which merits special attention, is the transition from emergency relief to rehabilitation and development. The temptation remains strong among donors and humanitarian agencies to concentrate on the emergency phase without making proper provision for the rehabilitation and development phase. An acute underlying problem during the recovery process is land-mines, which continue to kill and maim thousands of innocent civilians long after the cessation of hostilities. The ICRC has recently increased its efforts to press for a total ban on these weapons.

Finally, I should like to touch briefly on the "White Helmet" initiative. We welcome the intention behind the initiative, and we believe that several aspects of the implementation phase require careful consideration and further study to ensure that this new mechanism will not duplicate the efforts of existing humanitarian bodies, including the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

The grim reality of contemporary warfare is that more than 90 per cent of casualties are non-combatants, civilians who are often targeted because of their ethnic or religious affiliation. The enormous suffering caused by conflict situations is all too often a consequence of blatant disregard for international humanitarian law.

The obligation to respect and to ensure respect for humanitarian law should remain an absolute priority for States. Their commitment to this duty will be one of the principal goals of the forthcoming Twenty-sixth International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, which is to be held in Geneva in a week's time.

In addition to focusing on war victims and respect for international humanitarian law, it will deal with the principles of international humanitarian assistance and protection. The ICRC trusts that this important Conference will provide the 186 States party to the Geneva Conventions with the opportunity to reaffirm their commitment to humanitarian principles and international humanitarian law. Such a commitment is

more necessary and timely than ever before and should thus contribute to the strengthening of effective humanitarian coordination.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Spanish*): In accordance with General Assembly resolution 49/2 of 19 October 1994, I now call on the observer for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Mr. Pedersen (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies): The past year has once again confronted the international community with challenges of an unprecedented nature, not only because of the number of disasters but also because of the increasingly complex nature of disaster situations and the resulting difficulties that humanitarian agencies have in discharging their functions.

The report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/50/203 provides a comprehensive overview of the current complex, and often violent, context of humanitarian activities. It raises several issues that are of concern, including disrespect for humanitarian norms, the scourge of land-mines, rape as a war crime, added risk for relief workers, the impact of sanctions, and the limited means of humanitarian organizations for providing protection. These and other key topics will also be taken up by the twenty-sixth International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, which will convene in Geneva in early December this year.

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, with its 169 member National Societies, is working in the interests of the victims and the most vulnerable people in the world. It remains committed to the goals of international cooperation and coordination, but is also bound by its fundamental principles.

We need, therefore, to ensure that collaborative arrangements do not threaten, or are not perceived to threaten, the independence of action, the neutrality and the impartiality of our organization or of its member National Societies.

In our view, the key to improved coordination of humanitarian response at the international level lies in timely information- sharing, effective planning, accountability and transparency. This needs to include donors, international agencies, local organizations, and their beneficiaries. Equally important are common standards for humanitarian response, shared by all those concerned. In this regard, we wish to highlight the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations in Disaster Relief, which seeks to promote and safeguard standards of behaviour.

The Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, for its part, has also established a set of principles and rules for Red Cross disaster relief, which seeks to regulate a number of aspects of international humanitarian response within the Movement.

On the practical level, the International Federation has further developed its capacity to take action in crises through the establishment of so-called emergency response units, which combine technical equipment, personnel and training, as well as procedures and managerial structures, to make possible the rapid mobilization of the resources of its member National Societies and to ensure consistency.

I should like to comment briefly on the "White Helmet" initiative, referred to in document A/50/542.

We note that there has been a rapid increase in international assistance to mass populations fleeing violence and economic or social collapse, and we believe that, unfortunately, this trend will continue. In providing technical assistance in these types of operations, "White Helmet" volunteers will need to be aware of, and adapt their training and practice to, a number of trends.

The growing degree of violence and fear associated with relief operations calls for the highest standards from relief workers. Individual workers must be committed to the principles of neutrality, impartiality and needs-driven assistance. They must be trained and experienced in how to carry these skills through to their everyday behaviour in the field.

A further trend in relief today is towards longer and longer interventions. Relief workers should be able to travel back and stay with the returning population to assist with the initial stages of rehabilitation, and thus require comparatively long contract periods. We should also keep in mind the important developmental role of relief workers, which requires suitable training of personnel in this aspect of their work.

Last but not least, all disaster-affected populations include people with skills and knowledge who can assist in relief and rehabilitation. Relief work should build on

local capacities of people and organizations. While welcoming all initiatives that recognize the growing humanitarian needs around the world and seek to address them, the International Federation is concerned that appropriate standards of professionalism be developed and practised, and that all relief programmes should seek to build on local capacities, rather than displacing them inadvertently. Furthermore, these initiatives must be based on a comprehensive understanding and analysis of existing institutional infrastructures such as the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

The President took the Chair.

As stated in the report of the Secretary-General (A/50/203), action taken by the international community to end oppression or bring about change by non-military means can have major ramifications for those who are already victimized by inequitable political and economic structures. Economic sanctions hit the poor hardest and can have a deleterious impact on the work of the humanitarian organizations.

In its 1995 *World Disasters Report*, the International Federation has highlighted, *inter alia*, our growing concern over the humanitarian impact of sanctions. After several years of sanctions against Iraq, for example, the high price paid by the most vulnerable groups of the population is apparent. At the very least — as called for in the Secretary-General's Agenda for Peace — a formal mechanism needs to be set up to assess the potential impact of sanctions and monitor their effects. We also need to ensure effective delivery of adequate humanitarian assistance to those most in need. Furthermore, we strongly believe that the humanitarian impact of sanctions could be mitigated by exempting United Nations and other well-established humanitarian organizations, such as the International Federation, and by facilitating their work in the field.

In conclusion, the international community needs urgently to exert renewed determination and efforts to address the root causes of crises. We realize the difficulties in addressing these issues, but believe that this should make us even more determined to utilize, through effective coordination, our collective resources to meet the challenges.

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/50/L.23, entitled "Participation of volunteers, 'White Helmets', in activities of the United Nations in the field of humanitarian relief, rehabilitation and technical cooperation for development".

Before we proceed to take action on the draft resolution, I should like to announce that, owing to an inadvertent error, the name of Tunisia was not included in the original list of sponsors of the draft resolution appearing in document A/50/L.23.

I should like to announce also that since the introduction of the draft resolution the following countries have become co-sponsors: Cameroon, El Salvador, Israel, New Zealand and Ukraine.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/50/L.23?

Draft resolution A/50/L.23 was adopted (resolution 50/19).

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 154?

It was so decided.

The President: I should like to remind members that the Assembly will consider the two remaining aspects of sub-item (b) as well as sub-item (d) of agenda item 20 at a later date to be announced.

Action on draft resolutions submitted under agenda item 20 will also be taken at a later date to be announced.

In this connection, I should like to remind members, as announced in today's *Journal*, that the next meeting of the informal consultations conducted by Ambassador Sucharipa of Austria on draft resolutions submitted under agenda item 20 will be held on Thursday, 30 November 1995, at 3.30 p.m. in Conference Room 6.

Agenda item 11

Report of the Security Council (A/50/2)

The President: I call on the President of the Security Council, His Excellency Mr. Salim Bin Mohammed Al-Khussaiby, to introduce the report of the Security Council.

Mr. Al-Khussaiby (Oman), President of the Security Council: I am honoured to have this opportunity, as President of the Security Council, to address the General Assembly at this historic fiftieth session in order to introduce the annual report of the Council, covering the period from 16 June 1994 to 15 June 1995, in accordance with Articles 15 and 24 of the United Nations Charter.

It goes without saying that the members of the Security Council attach great importance to the timely preparation and submission of the annual report to the General Assembly. In presenting it, I have sought to follow the practice established over the last two years: after the draft of this annual report was issued to States Members, it was adopted at a public meeting of the Security Council on Monday, 13 November 1995. This is a tradition which was begun by the Permanent Representative of Brazil in 1993.

The consideration of the Council's report by the General Assembly constitutes an important occasion for substantive dialogue and interaction between these two principle organs of the United Nations, not just on the nature of the report, but also on the substance of the matters before the Security Council. This dialogue is a true indication of the importance of the General Assembly as the universal body representing the larger membership of the United Nations — a body which is entitled, in accordance with the provisions of the United Nations Charter, to discuss and consider not only the work of the Security Council, but also the work of all other organs of the United Nations.

Yet again, the report reflects the continued heavy workload of the Council in responding to problems related to the maintenance of international peace and security. As the report notes, during the period under consideration the Council held 152 formal meetings, adopted 70 resolutions and agreed upon 82 statements by the President. In addition, the Council members held 274 consultations of the whole, totalling some 420 hours, an increase over the figure for the preceding 12-month period.

The members of the Security Council have listened carefully to the proposal made in the debate on the Council's report in this Hall in previous years and to the debates elsewhere in this Organization on how the work of the Council can be made transparent and accessible to non-members of the Council as well. The members of the Security Council recognize the value of such transparency for the full and rapid implementation of the Council's resolutions. In June 1993, the Council established an informal working group on documentation and other procedural matters. That working group has continued to meet regularly, and a number of further steps have been taken following recommendations by that group.

In December 1994, in response to a proposal made by France and after discussion in a formal meeting of the Council, the President announced that the Council intended to have increased recourse to open meetings, in particular, in the early stages of its consideration of a subject. This proposal aims at allowing the Security Council to hear the views of Members of the United Nations that are not members of the Council on issues that are of great importance to their countries. The Council would decide on a case-by-case basis whether to schedule public meetings of this nature, the first of which was held in January 1995 to examine the Secretary-General's report on his "Supplement to An Agenda for Peace".

The briefings given by the Council presidency to non-members on the work of the Council, which were first undertaken in October 1994, have continued this year, and this is now an important and established practice.

In March 1995, following consideration in the working group on documentation and other procedural matters, the Council President announced that a number of improvements would be introduced to make the procedures of the sanctions Committees more transparent. These either have been put into practice or are in the process of being put into practice by the sanctions Committees.

There was also continued consideration this year in the Council of ways to enhance consultations and exchanges of information with troop-contributing countries regarding peace-keeping operations, including their planning, management and coordination, particularly when significant extensions of an operation's mandate are in prospect. Immediately after the presentation of last year's report on the Council to the General Assembly, on 4 November 1994, the then-President of the Council made a statement establishing new procedures for the consultation of and exchange of information with troop-contributing countries. These procedures, too, have now become an established practice, and thanks in this regard go to Argentina and New Zealand for having initiated this idea and seen it through.

Also, as part of the effort to improve the documentation of the Council and to make its work more accessible, the working group has been reviewing the list of matters of which the Council is seized. The process is an ongoing one. Items are removed only after extensive consideration and appropriate consultation. Neither the removal of a matter from the list nor its retention carries any implication for the substance of the matter. But the exercise is a necessary one of rationalization.

As indicated in its introduction, the Security Council report is not intended as a substitute for the official records of the Security Council, which provide a more substantive account of its deliberations.

The members of the Security Council will, I am sure, listen attentively to the debate we are holding here today and to the ideas raised and the comments made. They welcome this opportunity for a substantive dialogue with non-members of the Council and are ready, individually and collectively, to work with the members of the General Assembly for the attainment of the high goals and aspirations set 50 years ago.

The President: Before calling on the next speaker, I should like to propose that the list of speakers in the debate on this item be closed at 5 p.m. today. May I take it that the General Assembly agrees to that proposal?

It was so decided.

The President: I therefore request those representatives wishing to participate in the debate to place their names on the list of speakers as soon as possible.

Mr. Zlenko (Ukraine): The delegation of Ukraine would like to express its gratitude to the President of the Security Council, His Excellency Mr. Salim Bin Mohammed Al-Khussaiby, for his brief, precise and at the same time informative statement introducing the report of the Security Council to the General Assembly.

Our delegation has thoroughly studied that voluminous document. Our attention is drawn to its improved structure, its clear statement of the results of the Council's consideration of the issues before it and the reference materials it contains, set out with precision and in a way that is convenient for the reader. We cannot but note that this year the report includes a summary of the main trends in the activities of the Council's subsidiary bodies, in particular the various committees on sanctions.

Having analysed Security Council activities during the period under review, we cannot but admit that the Council has undertaken considerable efforts aimed at improving the forms and methods of its work, at enhancing its transparency and at including as many Member States as possible in the process of discussing important problems. The delegation of Ukraine welcomes the practice of carrying out extensive exchanges of views at official meetings on the most important issues relating to the maintenance of international peace and security, a practice which is being constantly refined by the Council. The de facto practice of systematic consultations between the members of the Security Council and the countries contributing troops to United Nations peace-keeping operations deserves our appreciation. The regular briefings given by representatives of the delegations serving as Presidents of the Security Council are of considerable assistance in providing information. Our delegation expresses the hope that all of these positive changes will be institutionalized in the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council.

In our opinion, the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations provided a good opportunity to make the Security Council's report to the General Assembly a special one, differing somewhat from a mere statistical reference book. We had expected members of the Security Council to take the opportunity — and the liberty — to draw some general conclusions on the activities of the Security Council during the past half century. Regrettably, we failed to find in the jubilee report of the Security Council the answer to the simple, and at the same time difficult, question of the role of the Security Council in establishing new international relations and its contribution to the creation of a new architecture for the world order. In this connection, we cannot but be surprised by the fact that when the question of the future of the Security Council is being discussed within the framework of the General Assembly, the Security Council itself seems to stand aloof and to show no interest in this problem.

It is no secret that the future of the activities of our Organization with regard to the maintenance of international peace and security is first of all to be seen in the light of preventive diplomacy. Most Member States have supported with enthusiasm the position paper of the Secretary-General, a Supplement to "An Agenda for Peace". It should be noted that the Security Council has taken the role of leader in the consideration of this item. All of us remember the thorough and profound debates held in the Council last January.

Yet the results of that discussion arouse disappointment. Instead of substantive discussion of the proposals and initiatives submitted by Member States and the formation of concrete, clear-cut recommendations to the Secretary-General, the Security Council has limited itself to the most general comments, laid out in a statement by the President of the Security Council. In this connection, the delegation of Ukraine calls upon the Security Council to return once again to the problem of United Nations peacemaking activities and to an analysis of their principal mechanisms with a view to devising specific and, most important, effective recommendations.

As one of the issues through which the Security Council could resume its consideration of United Nations peacemaking activities, Ukraine suggests the issue of establishing United Nations trusteeship over the process of the establishment of new States and of the restoration of democracy in countries with totalitarian regimes, in order to make the use of force inadmissible and ensure adherence to established norms of international law. The disintegration of the USSR, Czechoslovakia and the former Yugoslavia, and the restoration of democracy in Haiti and a number of other States present extensive material on which to ponder.

We cannot but be concerned about the Security Council actually withdrawing from the performance of its functions under Article 26 of the Charter of the United Nations. The delegation of Ukraine believes that during its consultations the Security Council must at least once every six months consider the problems of limitation of the arms race and disarmament. In this context, Ukraine welcomes the attempt by Argentina to draw the attention of the Security Council members to the problem of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

Justified criticism by Member States is aroused by the way in which they are informed of the activities of the committees on sanctions, as well as by the very process of sanctions review. Sanctions, imposed on behalf of all of Members of the United Nations, infringe upon the economic and other concerns of many countries. In this context, review of those sanctions must be of a public character.

In this connection, we propose that consideration be given to the possibility of publishing the summary records of the Security Council's consultations of the whole. That would enable the States Members of the United Nations to orient themselves clearly in respect of the motives and reasons behind action, or lack of action, on the part of the Security Council.

The delegation of Ukraine also repeats its proposal that a Security Council bulletin, including an account of the positions of the States members of the Council concerning the issues under consideration, be published monthly.

Here, I wish to make two further remarks. It is very important that States Members of the United Nations be informed of the holding of official meetings of the Security Council. This being the case, we propose that there be a fixed period of time between the decision to hold a meeting and the actual convening of the meeting, to enable the relevant Departments of the Secretariat to notify at least the interested delegations.

In view of the prevailing financial crisis, we regard it as unnatural that the United Nations should incur enormous expense in connection with the publication of military and technical information that are sent to Member States practically every day in thousands of copies. We suggest that a list of such documents be published weekly, together with notification of the time and the Secretariat location at which delegations might familiarize themselves with them. The economic benefits of such a simple arrangement are obvious.

It is no mere chance that the activities of the Security Council are at the centre of United Nations Member States' attention. The well-being and prosperity of all members of the international community depend, in the end, on the Council's decisions. In this connection, I hope that all States members of the Security Council — present and future — will always remember that it is the United Nations Members that

> "confer on the Security Council primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, and agree that in carrying out its duties under this responsibility the Security Council." —

and I underline the following words —

> "acts on their behalf."

Sir John Weston (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom, as a permanent member of the Security Council, welcomes this opportunity to consider in the General Assembly the annual report of the Security

Council. The Permanent Representative of Oman — this month's President of the Security Council — has already spoken eloquently on behalf of members of the Council. This debate provides a useful occasion to consider the manner in which the Council carries out its Charter responsibilities and the way in which it keeps the wider membership informed of what it does on their behalf.

The British delegation believes that it is important that we pay close attention to the working methods of the Council in order to secure the greatest possible transparency consistent with the efficiency and effectiveness of the Council. I should like to focus my comments on three of the transparency measures undertaken by the Council over the last year.

First, there is the work of the sanctions Committees. We all recognize the need of delegations to be kept informed of the work of these Committees — a need that is especially pressing for those whose companies may have applications pending before them. In March of this year, following a British initiative, the Council President therefore announced a number of measures to make the work of the sanctions Committees more transparent. These measures included the following: the practice of issuing press releases after meetings of the Committees would be increased; the status of communication lists under the "No objection" procedure prepared by the Secretariat would be made available to any delegation that wished to have a copy; a list of all other decisions by each active Committee would be prepared by the Secretariat, on a regular basis, and would be made available to any delegation that requested it; and an annual report to the Security Council would be prepared by each Committee.

It was also decided to include in the introduction to the Council's annual report to the Assembly more information about each Committee than has previously been provided. The result of this decision is reflected in the much fuller treatment given to the Committees in the report now before the Assembly. We shall continue to examine the work of the sanctions Committees to see if there are other ways in which their procedures might be improved.

Secondly, there is the question of the meetings held between troop contributors, the Secretariat and members of the Security Council. The arrangements established by the presidential statement of 4 November 1994 represented a considerable step forward, and one which the United Kingdom warmly welcomed. But the arrangements must be made to work better than they do at present. They must be more than an opportunity for the Secretariat to brief on developments in operations. They should be the occasion for a serious discussion between troop contributors and members of the Council on the mandates of the peace-keeping operations in which the men and women of those countries serve.

Those discussions should inform the work of the Council. To that end, Council members should be represented at those meetings, at a suitably senior level, and the Council President should report back to the Council, as is envisaged in the arrangements. As my Czech colleague, Ambassador Kovanda, said in his address to the Special Political and Decolonization Committee two weeks ago, these consultations should be seen not as a chore but as a source of wisdom and as a relevant input into the formulation of mandates.

Finally, more use should be made — as the former Minister for Foreign Affairs of France, Alain Juppé, suggested at the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly — of open meetings of the Security Council, particularly at an early stage of its consideration of a subject. This was a welcome reminder, and, in the British delegation's view, greater attention should be paid to it.

The Security Council's Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Matters must continue its efforts to find ways to enhance the transparency and efficiency of the Council's work through — among other measures — improvements to the Council's annual report to the General Assembly. The process of organic, evolutionary change must continue. For its part, the British delegation will be listening carefully to the comments made and the ideas raised here today as we seek to take that process forward. We will seek to take them into account as we prepare for the United Kingdom's presidency of the Security Council in January 1996.

Mr. Wibisono (Indonesia): Let me begin by expressing the Indonesian delegation's appreciation to Ambassador Salim Bin Mohammed Al-Khussaiby of Oman, President of the Security Council for the month of November, for having introduced on behalf of the Council the report (A/50/2) of the Security Council to the General Assembly covering the period from 16 June 1994 to 15 June 1995. As a member of the Security Council, my delegation associates itself with the statement made by the President of the Council. We should also like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the

Secretariat for the hard work they put into the preparation of this report.

My delegation is gratified to note that the consideration of the Security Council's report by the General Assembly this year is a continuation of the established practice initiated three years ago, providing once again an opportunity to engage in the necessary interaction and substantive dialogue between the two principal organs of the United Nations in accordance with Article 24, paragraph 3, of the United Nations Charter. This fundamental constitutional requirement for interaction and dialogue between the General Assembly and the Security Council has, in our view, become all the more important in view of the greatly expanded work and the ever-increasing responsibility of the Security Council in the maintenance of international peace and security. Needless to say, such dialogue and interaction are bound to support and strengthen the roles of both the General Assembly and the Security Council in discharging their respective mandates.

More importantly, however, it is my delegation's considered view that the holding of such a debate is a significant occasion that highlights the accountability of the Security Council to the General Assembly, as provided in Article 24, paragraph 1, wherein the Members of the United Nations

> "confer on the Security Council primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, and agree that in carrying out its duties under this responsibility the Security Council acts on their behalf",

and serves to achieve a better balance between the role of the Council and that of the other principal organs of the United Nations.

The views of my delegation with regard to the ongoing endeavours to reform and improve certain structures and procedures of the United Nations, including those of the Security Council, have already been presented on many previous occasions. Indonesia, along with the other non-aligned countries, has consistently emphasized that if the United Nations is to become a fully effective central instrument in a new and revitalized international order, reflecting the new realities of the international situation, it should be based on and truly reflect the democratic spirit of equality, equity and transparency, in representation as well as in the decision-making processes. As a logical consequence, therefore, the Security Council should also undergo a process of review and revitalization to ensure its dynamic adaptation to the evolving realities, so that it may continue to play an effective role as the body entrusted with the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, as well as for the peaceful settlement of disputes and crises, and so that it may respond to the need for full democracy and transparency in its work to reflect the current configuration of the membership.

It is in this context that my delegation views this year's report of the Security Council now before us. In considering the report, I wish to recall that during previous debates in this Hall and elsewhere in this Organization the overwhelming majority of the members of the international community have expressed the hope that the report might contain an evaluation of the issues considered by the Council and a detailed account of the work of its special committees. While we are cognizant of the disclaimer that the Security Council's report is not intended to be a substitute for the official records of the Council, but is, rather, a reference guide to its work, the fundamental deficiency of the report is that it remains merely a compendium of documents and resolutions and a listing of the decisions and actions taken by the Council on the many issues that have been brought before it.

We readily acknowledge that some of the legitimate demands made on the Council have already been responded to by its members and have already been reflected in the present report. We welcome the Council's decisions in March 1995 to make the procedures of the sanctions committees more transparent, decisions which have now been implemented, or are in the course of being implemented. The holding of direct consultations between the Security Council, the Secretariat and the troop-contributing countries on the establishment and conduct of peace-keeping operations has now become an established practice, particularly when significant extensions are due. The regular briefings on the work of the Council provided by the Council presidency to non-members are another important measure intended to enhance transparency. Furthermore, as an effort to improve the accessibility of the Council's documentation, draft resolutions in their provisional form, as well as the tentative monthly forecasts of the Council's programme of work, have been made available to all Member States. All of these measures are clear manifestations of the positive trends towards greater transparency in the work of the Council, which my delegation fully supports and which must be encouraged. Moreover, we have also maintained the call for an increased number of both

formal and informal meetings prior to the adoption of decisions, thereby allowing for the wider participation of non-members. Thus, the proposal made by France to have increased recourse to open meetings, thereby allowing the Council to hear the views of non-members, is, in our opinion, a step in the right direction.

Notwithstanding these welcome improvements, however, it cannot be denied that the report indeed reflects the heavy workload of the Council. But, despite its voluminous nature, the report regrettably remains basically a descriptive compilation of the numerous communications addressed to the Security Council and the decisions adopted by it. Its format has not drastically changed, nor has it been transformed into a document of substance commensurate with the greatly expanded role of the Council. It is the considered view of my delegation that the annual report of the Council, as mandated by Article 24 of the Charter, must be more than a mere description of activities and a reproduction of resolutions already known; rather, it should contain analyses and assessments of the decisions taken on the various issues in order to meet the need for greater clarity and understanding of the Council's reasoning and motives in adopting them. It is therefore imperative that the provisions of Article 15, paragraph 1, of the Charter pertaining to special reports of the Council should also be faithfully observed.

In this regard, my delegation fully endorses the decision contained in the Final Document of the Eleventh Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement, held in Cartagena, Colombia, in which it welcomed the actions taken by the Council with regard to its transparency and working methods. However, it considered them still insufficient and therefore urged the General Assembly to recommend to the Council further measures to ensure its full democratization.

With the firm conviction that the United Nations is the universal embodiment of multilateralism, providing the appropriate framework for effective cooperation and democratic dialogue among States, my delegation intends to continue to participate constructively in the process of revitalization, restructuring and democratization of the United Nations aimed at bringing about greater transparency in the work of all its bodies. Similarly, during our remaining period in the Security Council, Indonesia, together with the other members of the Security Council, will continue to work towards the further improvement of the presentation of the Security Council report to the General Assembly so that it may become a true instrument of interaction between these two principal organs. This, in our opinion, can be achieved only if the report is made more substantive and more analytical. To this end, my delegation is presently in the process of undertaking consultations with Member States. My delegation remains hopeful that through intensified dialogue and interaction, together we will be able to make the necessary improvements.

In conclusion, we firmly believe that increasing the degree of transparency and keeping the non-members informed about the Security Council's decisions would not only enhance its credibility, but would also bolster the legitimacy of those very decisions and thus improve the prospects of their implementation.

Mr. Sucharipa (Austria): The Austrian delegation appreciates the fact that the report of the Security Council to the General Assembly was again introduced by the current president of the Council, who this month is the Permanent Representative of Oman. This follow-up to the initiative taken by the delegation of Brazil in October 1993, and then by the delegation of the United Kingdom in 1994, can be seen as a contribution to enhancing — pursuant to and in accordance with Article 24 of the Charter — the relationship between the Security Council and the General Assembly.

By presenting the report, the presidency, on behalf of the members of the Security Council, demonstrates awareness of the Council's particular position *vis-à-vis* the General Assembly, as well as the readiness to enter into a dialogue with the Assembly. However, in our view, this particular position calls not only for rendering an account of the work accomplished but — even more — for increased interaction, wherever appropriate, between the members and non-members of the Council at an early stage of the decision-making process. An adequate flow of information towards non-members will allow them to understand better how the Security Council deals with political situations, and should therefore be continuously facilitated. A certain balance between useful confidentiality of Security Council consultations and necessary transparency has to be established.

Delegations with a special interest in particular situations dealt with by the Security Council should have the opportunity to offer their views at an early stage of the decision-making process. This applies especially to countries which are particularly concerned by a given conflict or to countries which, due to their geographic location, will have a specific role to assume in the course of operations mandated or authorized by Security Council decisions.

The Austrian delegation wholeheartedly welcomes the significant improvements introduced by the Council in the last year or so with a view to better access to information, including greater transparency in the work of the sanctions committee, as has just been outlined by the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom. These and other steps certainly constitute a positive side-effect of the ongoing discussions in the Open-ended Working Group on the reform of the Security Council and should be carried on. In this context, we are looking forward to future meetings of the Working Group, which, hopefully, will provide us with further ideas on an improvement of the working methods and the interaction between the Council and the General Assembly.

Today we repeat our view that, since the discussion on the enlargement of the Security Council meets with some obvious difficulties, the immediate need for greater legitimacy of the Security Council would require that greater attention be given to so-called Cluster II issues, with a view to further strengthening the transparency and the working methods of the Council.

Austria attaches special importance to a substantial dialogue in the field of peace-keeping operations. The current mechanism for interaction between the Security Council, the Secretariat and the troop-contributors, which is the — although limited — result of a most valuable initiative launched by Argentina and New Zealand, should be further strengthened. Efforts on both sides — Security Council members and non-members — will be called for in this context. To ensure the necessary commitment of Member States via public support both for ongoing and possible new operations, especially in the light of the important number of operations and with growing constraints in available resources, we feel that in any case the procedures set out in the presidential statement in document S/PRST/1994/62 should be fully implemented.

A higher degree of interaction leading to Security Council decisions which better reflect the views of the whole membership could be reached by, *inter alia*, implementing the valuable initiative launched by France to hold orientation meetings. This initiative, introduced a year ago, seems to have fallen into oblivion after, I think, two trial runs, and I am glad that today we have all heard the statement of the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom, calling for its revival.

A real opinion-building process, guaranteeing input by the membership at large, should be based on a triangular exchange of views and interaction between the members and non-members of the Council, as well as the Secretariat. The views expressed during the orientation debates would then have to be considered in the following decision-making processes. A better interaction between the Security Council and the General Assembly might assist Member States to better identify themselves with decisions taken by the Council. This would lead to a higher authority of the Council and make its decisions more effective.

Let me express my delegation's appreciation again for the work accomplished by the Security Council during the period under consideration. Last year's packed agenda reflects the ever- increasing challenges, which were, without doubt, subject to serious political considerations.

Let me, however, as I did last year, add a note of caution. There has to be concern about the ever-growing number of Security Council resolutions and presidential statements, bringing with it the danger of depreciation of their value and a certain tendency towards micro-management. In the interest of the authority of the Council, some restraint might, therefore, be appropriate.

The Austrian delegation was among those that last year made suggestions on the possible format of future reports of the Security Council to the General Assembly, including the possibility of monthly reports, which could then easily be put together to form the yearly report of the Security Council, without adding too much to the work load of the Secretariat.

In our view, the report as it is contains first and foremost an accurate listing of official documents issued by the Security Council during the period under consideration, and as such it is certainly a most helpful tool for delegations and — maybe even more so — for students of current history.

The value of the report would certainly be enhanced by the addition of some analyses of the negotiation processes and consultations that have led to particular decisions. We are, of course, fully aware of the potential difficulties involved. However, a more analytical report on the work of the Security Council would certainly contribute to its transparency as well as to the promotion of the interaction between the Security Council and the General Assembly to which I have referred. It might therefore be worth the additional effort that would have to be devoted to it.

Mr. Amorim (Brazil): Let me begin by thanking Ambassador Al-Khussaiby of Oman for his substantive presentation of the report of the Security Council covering the period from 16 June 1994 to 15 June 1995. We are glad to note that this practice of the President of the Council presenting the report, which was inaugurated by my own delegation in 1993 and continued by the delegation of the United Kingdom in 1994, is in the process of becoming a tradition. We welcome this trend as a positive contribution to enhancing the relationship between the Security Council and the General Assembly, in line with the growing interest of the membership at large in the Council's activities.

The consideration by the General Assembly of the report of the Security Council provides the States Members of the United Nations with a valuable opportunity to participate in the discussions on the work of an organ which retains a central role in the Organization's overall mandate. As the Security Council's intensified activity generates increased interest, the call for better and more thorough reporting is leading to some improvements that deserve recognition. But, although the rationalization of the Security Council's documentation and other procedures have contributed to increased transparency, it is clear that further progress is still necessary.

In the period under review, the number of formal Council meetings remained at approximately the same level as that of the previous year. Document A/50/2 is a useful reference guide to those meetings. The same cannot be said, however, with respect to the informal consultations of the whole, which took up 420 hours during the 12 months under consideration, against a figure of 353 hours for the previous 12-month period. The bulk of the Council's activity is increasingly being concentrated in such informal meetings, the contents of which reach the general membership only through voluntary briefings by delegations or by the President of the Council.

As the disproportion grows between the number of formal and the number of informal meetings, States that are not members of the Security Council continue to face difficulties in their efforts to keep abreast of events.

The widespread support for greater recourse to open meetings of the Council, expressed by all who took part in the debate on 6 December 1994 promoted by the delegation of France, and acknowledged in the presidential statement adopted on that occasion, has yet to be translated into more identifiable results. A productive exchange did occur in February this year with regard to the Secretary-General's "Supplement to An Agenda for Peace", but on other questions of great interest to the Organization there has been no similar opportunity. If the flow of information between the members of the Council and other Member States is indeed a shared objective, open debates should be held more frequently.

Communication between members and non-members is of particular importance as regards decisions on peace-keeping operations. With the increase in the number and complexity of such operations, their political and financial repercussions have acquired greater importance for Member States. Arrangements for consultation and exchange of information with troop-contributing countries, on the basis of the procedures outlined in the presidential statement of 4 November 1994, have to a certain degree improved the quality and speed of the flow of information available. But such arrangements need to be re-examined in the light of experience.

A more institutionalized mechanism for consultation between the Council, the Secretariat and troop-contributing countries on peace-keeping operations is in the interests of all concerned. With more regular and clearly defined meetings involving such actors, cohesion among them in all United Nations peace-keeping efforts will be strengthened, while their action in the field will become more effective.

This year's annual report purports to make the procedures of the sanctions Committees more transparent, in line with a Council decision that determined that the introduction of the report should contain more information about each Committee's activities. While there seems to be a laudable disposition on the part of the Council to make the work of the sanctions Committees less opaque to non-members, the measures taken so far fall short of what is expected. As discussions at present under way in the context of the Informal Open-ended Working Group on An Agenda for Peace have indicated, there is no disagreement over the need for greater transparency in this field. However, the Note by the President of the Council of 29 March 1995 (S/1995/234) has yet to be more fully and satisfactorily implemented.

The post-cold-war environment has led to the more frequent imposition of sanctions than was the case during the Organization's first 45 years. Their effectiveness depends on action by individual Member States, which must incorporate them into their legal systems. Strict observance of sanctions regimes will tend to be

reinforced by more readily available information from those in charge of implementing the relevant resolutions and decisions on sanctions.

It is natural, on the other hand, that, given the often high political and economic costs to specific States of observing certain sanctions regimes, they be entitled to follow closely deliberations affecting such regimes and that their views be taken into account through appropriate procedures. Concern over the situation of vulnerable populations should also find adequate channels to be legitimately voiced and, hopefully, heard.

The fact that legally binding decisions, such as the extension of sanctions regimes, are being taken in informal consultations of the Security Council remains an anomaly. The Working Group on Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council should continue to examine questions such as these in the context of the so-called cluster II list of items, which pertain to the organization and working methods of the Council. Discussions in that forum have already contributed to the introduction of some improvement in the methods and procedures of the Council and will undoubtedly continue to help raise the general level of awareness as regards the enhancement of the relationship between the Security Council and the General Assembly.

Brazil's term of office as a non-permanent member of the Security Council expired in the sixth month covered by the report. The perspective afforded by hindsight has not affected our commitment to the fundamental principles that oriented our participation in the Security Council during the biennium 1993 to 1994. Among these, I would highlight the permanent search for the peaceful and negotiated settlement of disputes, with the rule of law in international relations being observed and due respect being paid to the principles of non-intervention and of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States.

We continue to believe that the United Nations plays an irreplaceable role in the safeguarding of international peace and security, and we are in favour of a strong and representative Security Council capable of fulfilling its responsibilities with authority and legitimacy. Quickly changing international circumstances in the past half-decade have placed new challenges before the Security Council. While some have been successfully dealt with, in other instances the Council has had to face criticism in the midst of frustration.

The long and violent conflict in the Balkans left United Nations peace-keepers exposed to situations of combat for which they were not prepared. The unwillingness of the parties to compromise raised the level of exasperation of the international community progressively, while the Security Council remained, at best, an informed observer of a process over which it exerted only marginal influence. While we warmly welcome the Peace Agreement initialled last week in Dayton, Ohio, we would underline, at the same time, the importance of preserving the Council's role in situations in which international peace and security are clearly at stake.

With the rise in the number of cases where enforcement action is delegated by the Council to third parties, care should be taken that there are adequate mechanisms to ensure the desirable accountability of such endeavours. We remain convinced, on the other hand, that the competence of the Council should not be extended to matters not directly linked to the maintenance of international peace and security. Exceptional, ad hoc initiatives may seem an attractive option as an immediate response to lawlessness and criminal acts against humanity. But we should remain aware of the Security Council's limitations in the judicial field and favour only solutions which rest on a strong legal basis.

The Council's agenda comprises, to a great extent, situations of unrest in developing countries. We are encouraged by the progress achieved in southern Africa and Central America. Brazil has been participating in United Nations peace-keeping efforts in those regions and will continue to play its part in contributing to consolidating the advances that have been made.

As these fragile economies grapple with crises that destabilize them internally and negatively affect regional security, they suffer tremendous setbacks in their efforts to overcome underdevelopment. The unanimous acceptance of the linkage between peace and development should lead to greater sensitivity with regard to the acute problems faced by the countries emerging from economically and socially devastating conflicts in the third world.

The Secretary-General has pointed out on various occasions that peace-keeping operations, along with their military component, also help to reconstruct and reorganize strife-ridden countries through activities such as de-mining and road-building. The significance of such activities should not be underestimated. As experience is

gained in halting the proliferation of conflicts in the post-cold-war environment, however, increasing attention should be given to economic development in the context both of preventive diplomacy and of post-conflict peace-building.

In concluding, we wish to reiterate our support for the promotion of an intensified exchange between the Security Council and the General Assembly. The examination of the Security Council's annual report by the General Assembly remains, first and foremost, a fulfilment of the Charter's provisions. But as the general membership's interest and involvement in the Organization's activities in the field of peace and security expands, this occasion can become an increasingly useful opportunity for a comprehensive debate on the work of the Council.

Mr. Maruyama (Japan): Two weeks ago, the Security Council presented its fiftieth annual report to the General Assembly. If one were to compare this most recent report to the first one, submitted half a century ago, I am sure one would be struck by the dramatic expansion of the Council's role and activities in the maintenance of international peace and security, particularly since the end of the cold war.

In recent years, the Security Council has been meeting almost on a daily basis to review the many and pressing issues on its agenda; to assess situations in various parts of the world that might pose a threat to peace; and to undertake a range of actions to monitor cease-fires, prevent conflicts and limit their spread; to resolve disputes; and to enforce peace once a conflict has been settled.

Japan has always supported such efforts of the Security Council and is determined to contribute to its work. As the importance of the Council increases, and as international expectations of it continue to grow, the need to strengthen its functioning by enhancing its legitimacy and effectiveness has become all the more urgent. My delegation has reiterated on various occasions that restructuring the Council and improving the manner in which it conducts its work are two elements which, together, should form the basis of an overall package of reform. Japan sincerely hopes that agreement will be reached on both elements by the end of the fiftieth session of the General Assembly, in September 1996.

Improving the working methods of the Security Council was the focus of an extensive debate on this same item at the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly and again last March at the meeting of the Open-Ended Working Group for the reform of the Security Council. Many Member States expressed their views on the broad range of issues related to the way in which the Council works. The Council, for its part, has improved the flow of information and the exchange of ideas between members of the Council and other Member States. It has also made it a practice to hold more frequent formal meetings, particularly at the earlier stages of its deliberations on a subject. In addition, it has begun holding orientation discussions and has institutionalized the practice of holding presidential briefing sessions for States which are not members of the Council. Japan considers all of these measures to be extremely helpful and strongly supports them.

Nevertheless, there still remains much room for improvement as far as transparency in the Council's work is concerned. Japan continues to believe that there are three areas in particular which deserve careful consideration. The first is the provision of information by the Security Council to non-members, the second is a mechanism to permit the opinions of non-members to be reflected in the deliberations and decisions of the Council and the third concerns the need for better coordination between the Security Council and other organs of the United Nations, particularly the General Assembly.

First, with respect to the provision of information to States which are not Council members, we believe that the situation has significantly improved as a result of several measures adopted by the Council. In particular, I should like to single out for commendation the regular briefings on the Council's informal meetings for non-members by the President of the Council. Having said that, however, I also feel obliged to note the recent regrettable tendency towards less frequent briefings. Japan would like to request that the Security Council briefings be conducted on a daily basis. We would also like to suggest once again that papers distributed to Council members in the informal consultations also be made available more systematically to non-members on the same day.

With regard to the second component — a mechanism to ensure that the views of non-members are reflected in the Council's deliberations and decisions — it would be useful if the Council devised an appropriate and practical mechanism to provide interested non-members with an opportunity to express their opinions. The Security Council has taken a significant step in this direction by holding trilateral consultations with countries contributing to peace-keeping operations

and the Secretariat on various aspects of such operations. This practice, too, however, has become rather nominal, as the time allotted for these consultations and the information provided to these countries are insufficient. We hope that these consultations will be further improved and institutionalized.

There is also a need for a mechanism designed to provide opportunities to non-member States which have a direct interest in a particular issue - such as States which are neighbours of the parties to a conflict - to convey their views to the Council. We believe this could best be pursued within a framework of small and informal meetings between those States and representatives of the Council. As for the position of countries which are third parties to a dispute but are seriously affected by economic sanctions imposed by the Security Council, Japan suggests that the Council undertake consideration of practical means of soliciting their views and assessing their difficulties. This, in turn, will activate discussions of this issue in other United Nations forums. We also welcome the various initiatives that have been taken to improve the transparency and efficiency of the sanctions Committees.

The third point I wish to comment on is the relationship between the Security Council and the General Assembly. The United Nations Charter, as we well know, places primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security upon the Security Council. However, within this basic framework, the work of the Council and the General Assembly should be organically coordinated with a view to enhancing their cooperation and complementarity. We believe there are many areas, such as preventive diplomacy and post-conflict peace building, in which the two organs can play a complementary role.

Finally, allow me to comment briefly on the annual report of the Security Council to the General Assembly. While the report in its present form has a certain value as a repository of factual information, including a list of resolutions adopted by the Council, I believe it would have greater value and usefulness, and would stimulate more effective deliberations in the General Assembly, if it contained substantive or analytical descriptions of the Council's activities.

In closing, I should like once again to express my delegation's appreciation of the fact that measures have been introduced to enhance the transparency of the Security Council's activities. We hope such efforts will continue, with due attention given to the need to maintain efficiency in the Council's work. Japan for its part will redouble its efforts to contribute to the important work of the Security Council.

Mr. Razali (Malaysia): The report of the Security Council to the General Assembly is mandated in Article 24, paragraph 3, of the Charter which calls on the Council to:

> "submit annual and, when necessary, special reports to the General Assembly for its consideration."

Furthermore, the General Assembly, by virtue of its resolution 2864 (XXVI), adopted in 1971, decided to seek the views of Member States on ways and means of enhancing the effectiveness of the Security Council in accordance with the principles and provisions of the Charter. The increasing number of speakers on the present agenda item testifies to the importance attached by delegations to the work and functioning of the Security Council.

After considering the report of the Security Council, the General Assembly customarily adopts a decision stating that "The General Assembly took note of the report of the Security Council". While recognizing that the Assembly has never expressed approval or disapproval of the report taken as a whole, we firmly believe that it has the power to examine and discuss very carefully any questions arising from matters contained in the Security Council reports. We would like to re-emphasize that the debate on this item is consistent with Article 10 of the Charter.

Article 10 of the Charter empowers the General Assembly to

> "discuss any questions or any matters within the scope of the present Charter or relating to the powers and functions of any organs provided for in the present Charter".

That scope includes every aspect of the Charter, everything contained in it and covered by it. The very fact that this Article has been put at the beginning of the enumeration of the powers of the Assembly underscores the importance to be attached to it. It is the key to the entire role of the General Assembly in the United Nations. The General Assembly has thereby been designated as the global forum and indeed the conscience of the world.

Having studied the report of the Council as contained in document A/50/2, the Malaysian delegation would like to make the following observations:

First, while there have been some changes, the report, as in the past, is still a compendium of meetings and decisions, including a listing of communications and documentation received by the Council. The report, if not exhaustively examined in this Assembly, can remain merely perfunctory and a sheer waste of paper and resources of the Organization. While it would have been ideal to receive an analytical and substantive report, for instance in the format of the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization, Malaysia recognizes that the latter report is from the head of the Secretariat. Malaysia believes that this agenda item provides an excellent opportunity for the general membership to pronounce itself on the work of the Security Council as reflected in this report.

In this regard, the Malaysian delegation wishes to refer to chapter 24 of the report, dealing with the issue of security assurances. Malaysia was one of those countries which participated in the Security Council debate on 11 April 1995 preceding the adoption of resolution 984 (1995). Together with other countries, including Egypt, Malaysia supported Indonesia, which, speaking in its capacity as Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement, emphasized that the five declarations by the five nuclear Powers varied in terms of structure and content, as well as remaining devoid of any legal force. We underlined that the situation called for an internationally negotiated, legally binding instrument whereby all the nuclear-weapon States would be obligated to apply the same provisions and meet the same conditions.

The Council resolution clearly did not enjoy the support of the larger membership. As was the case of the Secretary General's "Supplement to an Agenda for Peace", the General Assembly, especially the First Committee should have first considered the issue.

Secondly, it is necessary to raise here the financial implications of the decisions of the Security Council, particularly those pertaining to peace-keeping operations. It is a standard practice to refer any draft resolution with likely financial implications to the ACABQ before the General Assembly takes a decision. Yet in the case of the Security Council no such procedure exists and the Fifth Committee addresses the budget of these operations only after the Council has taken a decision. Financial responsibility and accountability have to be applied to the Security Council as well. As we address various aspects of the reform of the United Nations, we need to set in train a specific process to hold the Council accountable

Thirdly, while welcoming the inclusion of the information on the activities of the sanctions Committees in the report, we think that the information provided is superficial and lacking in depth. It merely indicates the number of meetings held. In this regard, we believe that the report should have a separate chapter to comprehensively reflect the activities and decisions of each of the sanctions Committees. While we recognize that the press releases prepared by the Department of Public Information on the informal consultations of the sanctions Committees have been quite useful, they have no official status. We therefore would like to see what transpired in the informal meetings of the sanctions Committees reflected in the next annual report of the Security Council.

Fourthly, my delegation is perplexed by the procedure adopted by the Security Council at the end of August of this year when it took a decision on an item relating to the strength of the United Nations Confidence Restoration Operation in Croatia (UNCRO). It may be recalled that the Council, in conveying its decision, decided to send a letter, contained in document S/1995/748, from the President of the Security Council to the Secretary-General. We find this procedure odd and believe it is inconsistent with the normal practice of the Council, where decisions are normally taken in the form of resolutions, especially on issues relating to the mandate and strength of a particular United Nations peace-keeping operation. The procedure adopted by the Council in August therefore requires explanation. We would like to know the basis of the decision pertaining to such a procedure. Is it to be assumed that the President's letter has a status equal to that of a resolution of the Council? If so, we think the Council has set a dangerous precedent.

Fifthly, my delegation insists that the Assembly deserves to be fully informed of the practice regarding the circulation of communications from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro), a State which has yet to be admitted as a Member of the United Nations. In this regard, my delegation shares the views expressed by the Permanent Representative of Croatia and the Chargé d'affaires of Bosnia and Herzegovina in their letters addressed to the Secretary-General and contained in documents A/50/545 and A/50/656 respectively, in which they stated their strong objection

to the publication and circulation as documents of the United Nations of any documents from the so-called Permanent Mission of Yugoslavia. In the light of Security Council resolution 777 (1992) and General Assembly resolution 47/1, my delegation would like to know on what basis the decision was taken to have them circulated as United Nations documents. Who decides in this regard? Is it the Secretary-General or the Security Council?

Sixthly, while recognizing that there have been some positive changes with regard to the work and working procedures of the Council, as reflected in its various decisions, we believe that more could be done. We hope that the Council, in the near future, will be able to adopt and institutionalize other measures necessary to bring about more transparency and democracy in its work and decision-making processes. This is important to ensure that the decisions of the Council would enjoy the full support of the general membership. In this regard, my delegation shares the views expressed by the Secretary-General in his report (A/50/1) on the work of the Organization, in which he emphasized that

> "only if the decisions of the Security Council enjoy the full support of the international community ... can the Council fulfil its responsibilities under the Charter to maintain and consolidate international peace and security." *(A/50/1, para. 50)*

Admittedly, this Assembly itself must be further revitalized to fulfil its Charter-mandated functions. This revitalization must include a serious and in-depth examination of the workings and decisions of the Security Council. My delegation looks forward to working with other delegations in ensuring that the opportunity presented during the consideration of this agenda item is not squandered.

Mr. Wang Xuexian (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): The Chinese delegation believes that the annual report of the Security Council reflects in a fairly accurate manner the efforts made by the Council in the period from 1994 to 1995 in maintaining international peace and security. In the past year, there has been a growing trend towards the peaceful settlement of disputes through negotiations. The Council, which shoulders the heavy responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, has played a useful role in easing regional conflicts and promoting the peaceful settlement of international disputes.

As the report notes, during the period under consideration the Council held 274 consultations of the whole and 152 formal meetings, adopted 70 resolutions and issued 82 presidential statements, an increase on the figures for the preceding 12-month period, all of which are concrete expressions of the collective efforts of the Council. At the same time, the Council has adopted some new measures to make its work more transparent, with improved results achieved. I believe that these efforts by the Council will be welcomed by Member States.

The Chinese delegation has listened attentively to previous speakers. We welcome the free expression of views on the improvement of the Council's working methods and its transparency, to facilitate future discussion of these questions. We are of the view that the Council, as the main United Nations body with responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, should act on behalf of all Member States. First, the Council should develop a democratic style of work; establish the practice of democratic consultation; listen to the views of its members and the general membership; refrain from imposing the will of one country, or a few countries, on others; and refrain from adopting the arrogant attitude of "take it or leave it". Secondly, the Council should pay equal attention to all hot spots and refrain from applying double standards to conflicts in different regions. Thirdly, United Nations bodies, with their own terms of reference, should each attend to its own duties. The Council should not exceed its functions and meddle in the affairs of other bodies. Lastly, the Council, while ensuring its effectiveness and efficiency, should further increase the transparency of its work and strengthen its exchange of information and communication with the General Assembly and non-Council members, particularly the countries concerned. Only this can help enhance the accuracy, effectiveness and authority of its decision-making.

The Council shoulders heavy responsibilities. China, as a permanent member of the Council, sincerely hopes that it will take advantage of the occasion when the General Assembly considers its work to pool the wisdom of the general membership and earnestly assess past experience, so as to fulfil the mandates entrusted to it by the Charter in a more effective manner and continue to play a positive role in maintaining international peace and security, thus ensuring more stability and tranquillity, fewer conflicts and less turbulence in this world.

Mr. Lamamra (Algeria) (*interpretation from French*): My delegation would like at the outset to express its thanks to the President of the Security Council, Ambassador Salim Bin Mohammed Al-Khussaiby, for his introduction to the report of the Council for the period 16 June 1994 to 15 June 1995. My delegation is also pleased that this year the report was again adopted at a public meeting of the Council.

The Security Council has, as in recent years, produced a voluminous report, reflecting the considerable increase in its activities. Freed from the constraints of the cold war, the Council can now consider without ideological preconceptions situations that are potential threats to international peace and security. The list of the Council's activities is impressive, judging from the number of resolutions and presidential statements adopted and the considerable amount of time devoted to informal consultations. More important, the report notes that most of the decisions of the Council were adopted by consensus. Thus, out of 70 resolutions adopted during the period covered by the report, only 13 were adopted by a vote that was not unanimous, and two draft resolutions were defeated because of the use of the veto.

This trend is certainly positive, in so far as it indicates that the Council is no longer an arena for ideological confrontation and a forum for the expression of bloc polemics, which in the past did so much harm to the Council's cohesion and effectiveness.

I cannot fail to mention as one of the positive aspects of the report this year that its format is more attractive than in the past and that the lay-out of the different chapters makes the report easier to read. None the less, all of these positive aspects cannot conceal the fact that the report this year does not differ in its contents from that of past years. This report is really a recapitulation and enumeration of the Council's activities during the period concerned. In fact, as the authors of the report themselves say, it is simply

> "a guide to the activities of the Security Council during the period covered." (*A/50/2, Introduction, p. 19*)

During the debate on this same item during the forty-ninth session, many of us put forward constructive criticisms regarding the Council's reports. Our remarks referred both to the substance of the reports and to the Council's working procedures. Simple proposals were made to redress the situation. In most cases, taking those proposals into account did not require complex or special measures to implement them. Since the Council has not adopted most of the proposals in question, our remarks remain fully valid, as well as our insistence on the presentation of substantive reports that respond to the purposes specified in articles 15 and 24 of the United Nations Charter.

The debates on the report of the Security Council offer a unique opportunity to Member States to express their views not only on the Council's activities but also on the way in which this organ discharges the prerogatives assigned to it by the United Nations Charter. The interest that this debate has aroused among Member States in recent years can be explained by the central place that the Security Council now occupies in the functioning of the Organization, although this does not mean that sufficient attention has been given to the need for an increased involvement by the General Assembly, in terms of guidance, encouragement, monitoring and support of the Council's action.

Accordingly, the conception and content of the Security Council's reports to the General Assembly are valuable indicators for gauging the degree of respect for the fragile and imperfect balances established by the United Nations Charter among the different principal organs of the United Nations. Moreover, these reports shed light on the overall institutional evolution towards the objective of democratization of the United Nations. Thus the constitutional requirement for the submission of Security Council reports cannot be reduced to a mere added formality, since the reports are intended to help the General Assembly carry out its own political responsibilities in the field of the maintenance of international peace and security, the two principal organs being jointly responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security, the Assembly through its overall authority and the Security Council at the operational level.

In the light of these considerations, it must be said that this year's report does not make it possible for the General Assembly, and beyond it, the Member States on whose behalf the Council acts, to be fully associated with the activities undertaken in the field of the maintenance of international peace and security, as well as with their evaluation in the light of the goals and principles of the Charter and taking into account all other relevant data. Here I should like to point out that the technical difficulties that are usually invoked to justify the present approach to the reports are not insurmountable, as attested to by the simple and reasonable ideas developed

in the framework of the General Assembly's Working Group on the reform of the Security Council. Likewise, provided the political will exists, an in-depth examination of the questions contained in the report of the Council recommended in General Assembly resolution 48/264 is both possible and desirable and useful. Furthermore, the submission of special reports as envisaged by the Charter and briefings organized on the initiative of the President of the General Assembly or jointly with the Secretariat's technical and documentation support, can in our view promote a healthy and productive relationship between the two principal organs and would certainly deserve to be put into practice.

The Security Council's annual report to the General Assembly should be a yardstick to measure the progress made in improving transparency in the work and in the decision-making process. In this respect, we must note the lack of new initiatives in the direction of greater transparency and greater democratization, as well as the rapid waning of the consultation mechanisms, which now seem to be showing all their limitations. Likewise, implementation of the commitment to have greater recourse to open meetings — in accordance, incidentally, with the Council's provisional rules of procedure — is being unduly delayed.

As regards sanctions, the report sacrifices analysis to a descriptive and functional approach that does not do justice to a question that is increasingly drawing the attention of the entire international community.

In addition, the report is silent on the possible results of the Security Council's cooperation with the regional organizations in the current process aimed at tapping the potential for complementarity. In view of the hopes placed in this type of cooperation, lessons should be drawn from current experiences such as that of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), through which the Security Council is supervising a process leading to a referendum of self-determination for the people of Western Sahara organized by the United Nations in cooperation with the Organization of African Unity (OAU). Processes that involve other forms of cooperation are under way in other parts of the world, and it would be good for the annual report of the Council to present an evaluation of them from both a political and a practical standpoint.

Through these comments and suggestions, which join those of other delegations, the members of the Security Council are aware of the interest we take in their activities and our expectations of them. It is to be hoped that the report to be submitted to the fifty-first session of the General Assembly will show a qualitative evolution and that it will attain the level needed to foster a fruitful dialogue underpinned by the contractual relationship enshrined in article 24 of the United Nations Charter.

Mr. Eitel (Germany): Allow me at the outset to associate my delegation with what has been said today by the President of the Security Council, the permanent representative of Oman, Ambassador Al-Khussaiby. In addition to his remarks I want to say the following.

We welcome the presentation of the report of the Security Council to the General Assembly. This year's report, like the report last year, is again extensive and has been extremely work-intensive in its compilation. It reflects the vast agenda that the Council had to deal with between June 1994 and June 1995.

The report is an informative document that takes account of all the Council's activities. In our view, however, more analytic elements in addition to the presentation of facts might have given the report more substance. We also hope that future reports will better reflect Council members' own views of their work and indicate in which areas differences of opinion existed. We feel that the general membership would thus be in a position to evaluate more accurately the action taken by the Council during the reporting period.

None the less, the report in its present form represents, in our opinion, an important step towards more transparency, which is of vital interest to the overall credibility and thus also to the effectiveness of the Council. More and better information about what the Council does and why the Council does it is in our opinion a crucial element for reform of the Security Council.

During our presidency of the Council in June this year we tried as much as possible to take into account the general membership's need for information. We attach the highest importance to transparency and to the free flow of information. We therefore briefed non-members of the Council on the Council's work on a daily basis. We believe this to be a necessary and most fruitful exercise not only for the general membership but also for Security Council members themselves. We will continue to support efforts to further develop mechanisms for an increased and improved flow of information between Council members and non-members.

The Vice-Chairmen of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council distributed their compendium of observations and assessment in document A/49/965. It is a most valuable document. In last year's statement we indicated that we supported many of the ideas contained in the observations on Cluster II which aim at enhancing the Council's transparency and its working methods. Some of these have been implemented by the Council since then. Others still need to be adopted.

The section of the present report dealing with the activities of the various sanctions committees reflects the decision of the Council in March 1995 to provide more information on each of the sanctions committees. More information will help make the procedures of the committees more transparent. As Chairman of one of those committees, I welcome this improvement. It is a step in the right direction.

We reaffirm Germany's support of proposals aiming at an enhanced dialogue between the Council and the general membership. A larger number of open meetings would allow the Security Council to hear the views of Members of the United Nations that are not members of the Security Council on a case-by-case basis.

Equally, we support better coordination between the Council and troop-contributing countries, as initiated by Argentina and New Zealand. New procedures for consultations and exchanges of information with troop-contributing countries, as presented in last year's report of the Council to the General Assembly, have in the meantime become an established practice.

Improving the transparency and openness of the Council is an essential element of Security Council reform. The report of the Open-ended Working Group, the compendium of observations and the assessment of the Vice-Chairmen confirm this, as do a large number of the statements delivered by Heads of delegation during the general debate and during the Special Commemorative Meeting marking the fiftieth anniversary of the Organization. Member States consider expansion of the Security Council and improvement of the transparency of the Council's activities to be of equal importance and to be parts of one overall package. This point of view has always been shared by my country. Only by increasing the Council's transparency and by facilitating the flow of information between the Council and non-members of the Council can we reassure the general membership that its views are adequately represented in the Council.

Germany once again welcomes the report of the Security Council to the General Assembly. The present report reflects the Council's awareness of the need to achieve greater transparency in its work. I remain confident that further measures will be taken in this direction. If the Council wants to remain credible, non-members and members of the Council alike will have to continue to work in this direction. I am hopeful that many of the constructive suggestions made by Member States in the past will contribute to that end. They are an integral part of the reform package aimed at making the Council more transparent, more credible and better able to maintain peace and security.

The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.